Augustine of Hippo 354-430 AD

“Are you going to take part in a celebration of the New Year? Are you, just like a pagan, going to play dice and become intoxicated when you believe, hope, and love otherwise? How can you then sing with an open countenance: *“Save us, O Lord our God: and gather us from among the nations”*? (Pslm 106:47) For you are segregated from the pagans; associated with them physically, you are unlike them in your way of life. See how marked this separation is if only you make it so, if only you prove it. For our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became Man for our sake, paid a price for us. He gave Himself as a price and He did so for this purpose, namely, to redeem and to separate you from the pagans……..When they give gifts, do you give alms. They are called away by songs of license; you, by the discourses of the Scriptures. They run to the theatre; you, to the church. They become intoxicated; do you fast. If you are not able to fast today, at least dine in moderation. If you have acted thus, then you have rightly sung: *“Save us, O Lord our God: and gather us from among the nations.”* - **Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 198**

Maximus of Turin 380-465 AD

“I have no small complaint against most of you, brethren; I speak of those who, celebrating with us the Nativity of the Lord, gave themselves up to the Gentile holidays, and after that feast of superstition prepared for themselves a meal; so that those who had previously rejoiced in holiness might afterwards be intoxicated by vanity, not knowing that he who wishes to reign with Christ cannot rejoice with the world, and that he who wishes to find righteousness must decline lust……..How then can you religiously celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, those who celebrate Janus as much as is in you most devoutly? For Janus was a man, the founder of a city, which is called Janiculus, in whose honor the heathens are called Januaries; Hence he who worships the Janus sins, because he brings the homage of the divinity to a dead man. This is why the apostle says: “*You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years; I am afraid that I have labored among you without a cause.*” (Gal 4:10) For he observed the day and the month that he either did not fast during these days or did not go to church. He observed the day that he did not go to church the day before but went to the field. Therefore, brothers, let us decline with all diligence the festivals and holidays of the Gentiles, so that when they feast and are happy, now we let us be sober and fast, so that they may understand that their joy is condemned by our abstinence.”- **Maximus of Turin, Sermon 63 ”On the Kalends of January”**

Caesarius of Arles 470-542 AD

“On the very eve of this feast there also are some simple men who set their little tables full of many things which are necessary to eat, and they want to keep them arranged this way throughout the night, believing that in this way the Calends of January can benefit them, so that throughout the year their banquets will continue

with such plenty……..If anyone wills to observe any practice from the custom of pagans on these days, it must be feared that the name of Christian will not be able to help them. Therefore, when our holy ancient fathers observed that the majority of the human race were obeying gluttony or dissipation on these days and were possessed with a mania for drunkenness and wicked dances, they passed a decree for the whole world. Throughout all the churches a public fast was imposed, so that those miserable men might realize that they had committed such a great evil that it was necessary for all the churches to fast on account of their sins. For this reason, dearest brethren, let us fast on these days, and with a true and perfect charity let us grieve over the foolishness of miserable men, so that they may understand their wickedness as they see a public fast being observed for them. For we should not despair that through your prayer and abstinence God may correct them, for with ineffable goodness He promised this through His Apostle when he said: *"The person who brings a sinner back from his way will save his soul from death and cancel a multitude of sins."* (Jam. 5:20) - **Caesarius of Arles, Sermon 192**

2nd Council of Tours 567 AD

"In regard to the fasts of monks…….Every day between Christmas and Epiphany is a festival day, and they all will have banquets except for those three days that our fathers have established for treading upon the custom of the pagans, on the Kalends of January. On those days, they shall have private litanies performed in the church, at the eighth hour celebrate the Mass of the Circumcision on the very first day of January"- 2nd **Council of Tours, Canon 17**

Isidore of Seville 560-636 AD

1.The church instituted the fast of the first day of January on account of the error of paganism. It was Janus, that ruler of the pagans, from whose name the month of January was named. Ignorant men, honoring him as if he were a god, handed him down to posterity in a religious sense of honor, and they sanctified that day with stage productions and luxuries.
2. During this time, however, miserable people and, what is worse, even the faithful, taking on strange appearances, are transformed in the appearance of wild beasts. Others, changed by a feminine bearing, represent their masculine features as those of a woman. Some even, in a fanatic custom, are profaned by the observation of auguries on this day. They make a lot of noise in everything they do, leaping around and clapping their hands in dancing. By all these things the wickedness becomes more disgraceful, groups bonding between themselves and between both sexes, stripped of spirit, out of their mind with wine, the turmoil is all mixed together.
3. The holy fathers, therefore, observing that the greatest part of the human race was caught up in these sacrileges and bodily pleasures on this day, decreed a public fast in the whole world throughout all the churches, through which people might recognize that they were acting perversely to such an extent that it was necessary

in all the churches to fast for their sins.-**Isidore of Seville, De ecclesiasticis officiis Ch. 41**

4th Council of Toledo 633 AD

“Moreover, in the other times, that is, on the Kalends of January, which are observed due to the error of paganism, alleluia shall not be sung at all. During these days, besides fish and vegetables, just as in Lent, abstention from meat is observed, and by some, even wine is not drunk. Therefore, if any bishop, priest, deacon, or anyone from the order of the clergy is found to follow their own judgement before this decree, he shall be compelled to be deprived of the duties of his office and be deprived of Paschal Communion."- 4th **Council of Toledo, Canon 11**

Academic quotes on fasting during the Kalends of January

“The Gallic bishops assembled in 567 in a council in Tours were in turn aware that their resistance to the Kalendae had a long history. Canon 18 “On Fasting” treats the “ancient custom, begun by the monks” (antiquaamon achis instituta) and gives as its most complex application the customs in the festival period between Christmas and Epiphany that go back to patres nostri: **“**Every day between Christmas and Epiphany is a festival day, and they all will have banquets except during those three days where our ancestors, to stamp out the pagan habit, decided to have private offices during the Kalendae Ianuariae– to sing in the church and at the eighth hour celebrate the Mass of Circumcision to God on the very first day of January.**”** Isidore of Seville confirms this custom and its reason in his treatise On Church Offices: “The Church began fasting during the Kalends of January, because of the pagan error.” He adds an ample description of the rituals performed by the pagans that ranges from masks to ecstatic dancing and reiterates that the church leaders instituted a world-wide fast “throughout all the churches” against the sin of this debauchery; the claim that this fasting was adopted by all the churches confirms the hostility of all the different Christian groups in East and West. The Fourth Council of Toledo, held in 633 when Isidore was still in office, concurs and gives details of what was allowed: “fish and cabbage, like during Lent ...; some do not drink wine.” The insistence on this fast suggests that its cause, the ubiquity of the rites of the Kalendae Ianuariae, had not yet disappeared, confirming the complaint of Martin of Braga, Nitigisius of Lugo, or their colleagues in Tours, Autun, and Byzantium. We cannot know whether this insistence on fasting during the Kalendae Ianuariae, confined to the West and for the first time attested in Augustine’s sermon, goes back to an invention of the bishop of Hippo (Isidore’s ascription to nostri Sancti Patres would certainly fit) or whether its pre-dates Augustine as a radical, ascetic, and monastic answer to the pagan festivities. What is clear, on the other hand, is that Christians perceived fasting as somber and thus kept it strictly away from their own joyous festivals.”-**Fritz Graf. *Roman Festivals in the Greek East: From the Early Empire to the Middle Byzantine Era.* United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pg. 148-150**

Beginning with Augustine, preachers, and ecclesiastical authorities regularly enjoined and eventually legislated that Christians perform a fast on the Kalends……..In a filibuster-length Kalends sermon, Augustine attempted to cleave the Kalends in two: “They [‘pagans’] give strenae, you [Christians] give alms. They commit themselves to earthly errors, you commit yourselves to the words of divine scriptures. They run to the theater, you to church. They get drunk, you fast.” Apparently fasting (and the rest) was a tough sell. Later in the same sermon, an exasperated Augustine asked: “Is it, really, a big thing to fast in this season, to break your fast in the evening on so short a day?……..Certainly, nothing is easier than a fast on such short days. But, you are unwilling to fast on the Kalends of January.” In a shortened version of this same sermon, Augustine conceded that, “if you cannot fast today, at least break your fast with sobriety.” In addition to the obvious allures of the Kalends, social pressure may have given extra encouragement—according to Augustine, it was common to hear exhortations to celebrate and to act irrationally (that is, to drink and to have fun) instead of fasting during the January festival. Despite Augustine’s seeming lack of success, other preachers took up the call to fast—including a contemporary and compatriot of Augustine. Maximus of Turin urged his audience to shun “pagan” festivities: while they celebrate, good Christians should instead remain sober and fast, which might, Maximus hoped, embarrass the “pagans.” Caesarius of Arles nurtured a similar hope that the supposedly universal, “public fast” instituted by “sacred ancient fathers” as well as prayer would shame the wicked into amending their evil ways. In a second sermon, Caesarius once again urged his congregation to fast and to pray “on behalf of those miserable men who worship the Kalends.” Following Caesarius, Isidore of Seville likewise observed that sacred fathers imposed a public fast on the Kalends of January to combat “pagan” errors and to humiliate those who celebrated the Kalends. Eventually, conciliar canons would reinforce these efforts by institutionalizing a fast in competition with, and in opposition to, the Kalends. The Council of Tours in 567 suspended the otherwise daily prandium (breakfast or lunch) from Christmas to Epiphany, so that Christians could fast on the Kalends, and it reaffirmed the exhortations of patristic authors to trample on pagan custom with private litanies (prayers) on the first three days of January. Psalms were also to be sung in church. The Fourth Council of Toledo (633), led by Isidore, also confirmed the Kalends fast, and as a result, some Christians avoided meat and others wine, though fish and greens were allowed. This same canon from the Council of Toledo also ruled that “on the Kalends of January, which was performed on account of pagan error, the Alleluia should not be sung at all.”-**Jacob A. Latham. "The Re-invention of the Kalends of January in Late Antiquity: A Public Festival Between "Pagans" and Christians." Journal of Late Antiquity 15, no. 1 (2022): 69-110. Pg. 100-101**

The first of January gradually came to be filled with a series of religious celebrations in the Western liturgical calendar. We need to remember that this day in the calends of January was the day when the cheerful idolatrous festivities of the Saturnalia took place. To contrast with such pagan practices, the oldest Christian celebration was a

penitential festival with fasting and prayer, known as Ad prohibendum ab idolis. This office gradually lost importance during the 6th and 7th centuries, so that the Church of Rome could add the commemoration of the Virginity of Mary, the mother of God, on 1 January…….. If we now focus on the celebration of the liturgical festivity of the Circumcisionis Domini, we need to point out that one of the earliest mentions of this commemoration can be found at the II. Council of Tours (567), to be specific in canon 18 (17), where the various fasting periods throughout the year are prescribed: **"**And because between the Nativity of the Lord and Epiphany, there are festivities every day, and they will have the same meal every day except for that three-day period, which our father established to tread upon the custom of the Gentiles, to hold private litanies on the Kalends of January, so that in the church, psalms are sung, and prayers are offered, and on the very Kalends of the Circumcision, a mass is celebrated, pleasing to God; but after Epiphany until Lent, they shall fast three times a week." As can be seen, the celebration of this vespers mass of the Lord's Circumcision still falls within the liturgical context of the days of fasting and prayer of the ancient office of the calends of January. This penitential period that contrasted with gentile excesses, established by the early Church Fathers and recalled by St. Augustine in the sermon prepared for this day, still has a significant presence in Hispanic documents from the first half of the 7th century on. One of the most important testimonies is that of St. Isidore, who in his treatise written circa 610-615, titled De ecclesiasticis officiis, only describes Christmas and Epiphany as feast days in the Christmas season (De ecclesiasticis officiis, bk. I, chaps. 25 and 26). Nevertheless, the day of the calends of January, that is, the first day of the year, is mentioned explicitly as one of the days of fasting in the year that had been created to counteract pagan practices [De ecclesiasticis officiis, bk. I, chap. 41 (40): De ieiunio kalendarum ianuariarum]: "The Church instituted the fast of the Kalends of January because of the error of paganism. Janus, indeed, was a certain prince of the pagans from whom the month of January derives its name. Uninformed people, treating him as a god in their religion, handed down this tradition to posterity and consecrated that day to theatrical performances and debauchery. Therefore, the holy fathers, considering that a great part of the human race indulged in such sacrileges and debaucheries on that day decreed a universal public fast throughout the world in all the churches, through which people would acknowledge that they were acting so wrongly that it was necessary for all churches to fast for their sins."…….It was possible for this situation to continue until the IV. Council of Toledo, held in 633, canon 11 of which, is devoted to forbidding the chanting of the hallelujah in Lent, clearly shows that the calends of January are a period of penance, and quite directly invokes the previously mentioned text by St. Isidore included in De ecclesiasticis officiis, as it recalls how it was created to counteract pagan festivals: "In the times of the other Kalends of January, because of the error of the pagans, altogether Alleluia will not be chanted, and in these days, besides fish and vegetables, as in those forty days, abstention from other meats is observed, and by some, even wine is not drunk."**- Eva Castro Caridad. "Hispanic Texts in Diem Circumcisionis Domini." In *Hispania Vetus: Musical-Liturgical Manuscripts from Visigothic to the Franco-Roman Transition (9th-12th Centuries),* edited by Susana Zapke. Bilbao. Fundación BBVA, 2007. Pg. 127-128**